

THE
HAPPY VILLAGERS,

EMBELLISHED WITH AN
ENGRAVING.

DUBLIN.

PRINTED BY J. SHEA,
Children's Bank Ware-house,
42, COLLEGE-GREEN.

1807.

CHILDREN'S BOOK
COLLECTION

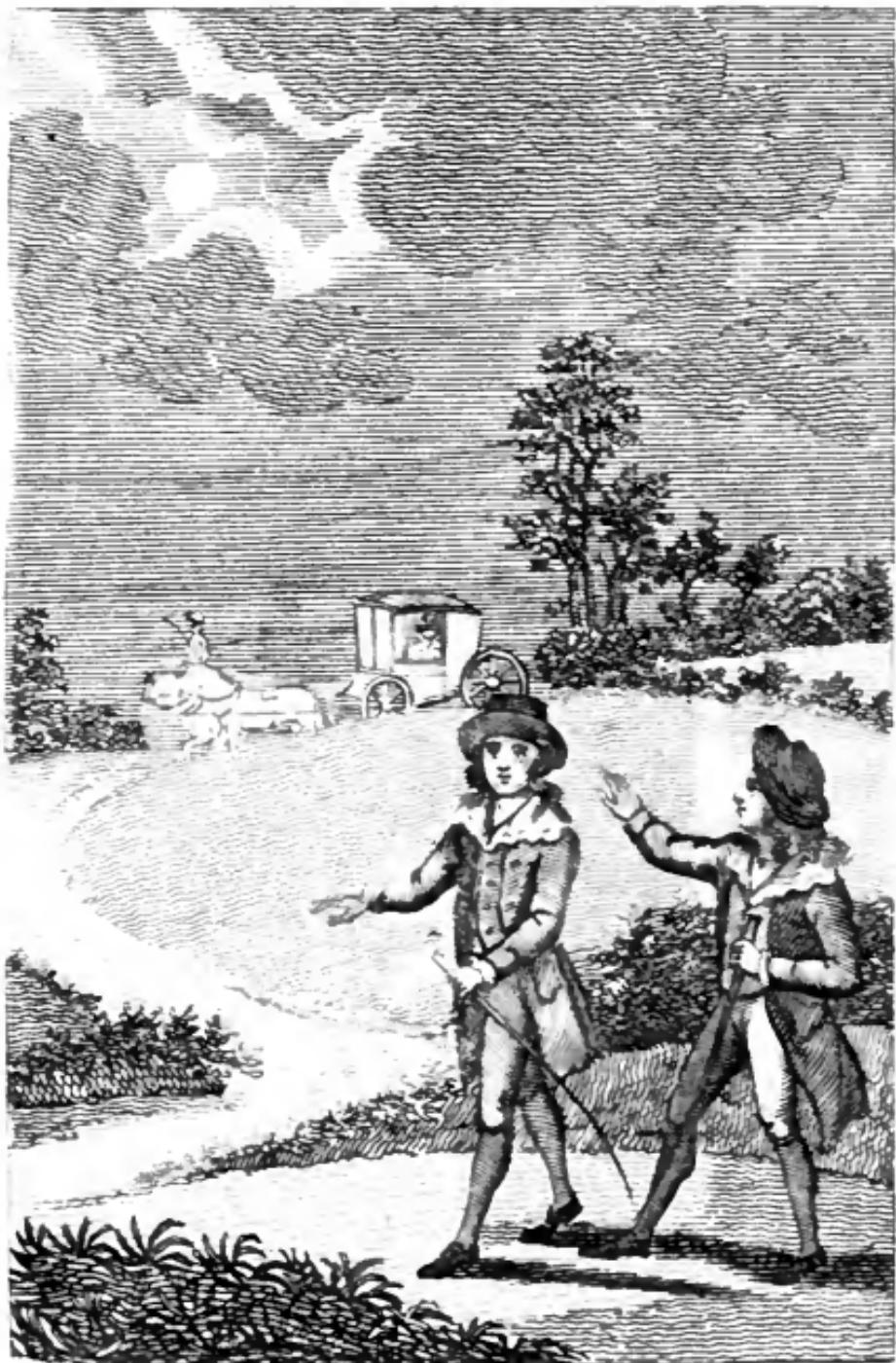
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MR. JACKSON had been an eminent tradesman in the city of Dublin, where he by trade acquired an independent fortune, and was now retired into the country, to spend the remainder of his days amidst rural retreats, to enjoy the pleasure of rambling through woods and groves, by the side of purling and meandering

streams, while the harmony of the feathered songsters would charm the ear, and lull the busy mind into the most tranquil repose.

The retreat Mr. Jackson had chosen was situated in the county of Wicklow, and near to the place where he drew his first breath. His house was a well designed mean between the vast piles raised for magnificence, and the smaller ones in which convenience alone is considered. The walk from the back of the house led

through

through a wood, by the side of a delightful stream, which meandered over grafts from out of a deep hollow. A gush of water which fell into it, gurgled through a rocky cavity ; and in front you looked down on a fine lawn, terminated with a noble bank of hanging woods.

He would frequently ramble to a great distance from home, to survey the beauties of the surrounding country. He had already visited every neighbouring village, and

therefore one day strayed further than usual in pursuit of new objects. On a sudden he discovered a delightful valley, the appearance of which seemed to correspond with every thing descriptive of a rural scene.

It was surrounded on all sides by hills, at the feet of which were thickly scattered cottages, groves and gardens, which seemed to be the abode of rural happiness. The silence of the scene was broken only by the dashings of a tor-

gent, which, rushing from an eminence, precipitated belloing into a cavern beneath. Having there vented its rage in foam, it then divided into a multitude of little rills, and forming serpentine sweeps, refreshed the meadows and surrounding gardens with its friendly streams.

However pleased Mr. Jackson was with the natural beauties of the place, he was no less struck with the neatness and simplicity of the many cottages that presented them-

selves to his view, every house having a garden, an orchard, and some well cultivated ground about it. Their only fences were hedges of holly, which afforded a convincing proof of two things, the fertility of the soil, and the confidence each one had in his neighbour.

Mr. Jackson was so wholly employed in contemplating this pleasing scene, that he paid no attention to a storm that was gathering around him, till the lightning flashed in

in his face, the thunder rolled over his head, and the rain began to fall in torrents. He instantly ran to the nearest farm door, and, having there knocked, gained immediate admittance.

It was an elderly woman who came to the door, and who, though old, was not decrepid, and appeared to have something venerable in her countenance. “Come in sir, (said she), and I will make a fire to dry you. I am glad our cottage was so near to

you ; but you would have met with a kind reception in any of these cottages. There is hardly a house here which is not kept by some of our children or descendants."

Mr. Jackson had sufficient leisure, while the good woman was lighting the fire, to survey the apartment. Every thing appeared uncommonly neat, and it was easy to be seen, from the nature of the furniture, that Necessity had no abode under that roof.— The novelty of the whole scene,

scene, and the particular words the good old woman had dropped in conversation during the lighting of the fire, gave Mr. Jackson a strong desire to know further particulars.

While he was drying his clothes, he heard a voice in the other room, asking if the stranger was taken care of, to which the good woman replied in the affirmative, "I suppose (said Mr. Jackson) that is your husband in the next room, whose voice I hear.

hear. May I go in and thank him for his hospitality and kindness?"

"With all my heart, sir (replied the woman), you will please to step in, and I believe you will not be dissatisfied with your reception." Mr. Jackson did so ; and there found an old man reclining on a bed, of which the clothes and furniture were very neat and clean. He had on a cap, and his snow-white locks hung over his venerable shoulders. His countenance indicated

indicated the goodness and serenity of his heart, and even Time had here been more sparing of his devastations than is generally the case.

The appearance of this happy villager had a great effect upon Mr. Jackson, who could not look on him without being, in some measure prejudiced in his favour.— “What is the matter with you? (said he to the old cottager) I suppose you are ill, and obliged to keep your bed?”

“God

God be praised (replied the old man), that is not the case ; though it cannot be expected, that a person turned of four-score years of age should be free from all kinds of complaints. It is not a long time since I have given up daily labour, which my children obliged me to do ; for they said I had worked long enough for them, and that it was now time they should work for me in their turns."

Mr. Jackson

Mr. Jackson highly applauded the conduct of his children ; and observed to the old man, that he must have purchased his present repose at the expence of a great deal of labour ; but he wished to know, after having passed his life in such active scenes, how he could amuse himself at present.

“ My whole life (replied the old man), has been a constant succession of labour. There are few men who have carried in more hay, or tied more

more sheaves together, than I have ; but my labour procured me health, contentment, and happiness. As to time, it never sits heavy on my hands, and when my body is at rest, my mind is at work. How can any person be at a loss for thoughts, who has ten children, and fifty children's children to think for ? They every day give me an account of their affairs and labour, and it is I who put every thing in order. There is always one constantly upon my hands

hands that must be married, and matches of that kind are not to be settled in a moment. Those I have provided for in this way are now in a thriving state. I have at this time three marriages in hands, and I hope they will soon be settled to the mutual satisfaction of all parties."

Mr. Jackson observed, that he must be very happy in so numerous a family, and asked him how many he had at home with him. " I have at present only two (replied the

the old man), who are my grand-daughters ; for I cannot lodge an army here. It is my lands, and not my house, that I wish to enlarge. Thank God I have been able to give each of my children a tolerable portion ; not in gold, but acres, and that without impoverishing myself. For a mere trifle, I bought a large quantity of land, which none of my neighbours thought worth meddling with : but I set about improving it, and gave it to my daughters as so many

many marriage portions, and are now, in their improved state, of great value.

“ Whenever any of my children were ill, I had skill enough to cure them by the use of those few plants I am acquainted with, and of their behaviour to me I never had any reason to complain. I always took care to set them a good example: for though in my youth I was as wild as any other, and there could not be a dance in this or any neighbouring parish, but I

was

was sure to be there ; yet, as soon as I was married, I left off those pranks. My wife was fortunately handsome, good, and sprightly, and that kept me in awe.

“ I took my boys into the fields with me as soon as they could walk, and I presently made them useful in one way or other. I put my youngest on the plough, and was pleased to see the others frolic around him ; and, on my return home in the evening, my little girls would divert me with

with singing, while they were spinning at their wheel.

“ I used to go among my children and grand children, to see if every thing went on properly ; but now, since old age has prevented me, they come and see me. The sermon is no sooner over on a Sunday, than my daughters and grand daughters bring their little ones ; and it would please you, sir, to behold me in the midst of twenty women, dressed as for a marriage, and as pretty as angels.

There

There is a family resemblance in their children, and that charms me."

Mr. Jackson observed, that the other six days of the week must be very tiresome to him, since he could not have the company of his family to amuse him. To this the old man replied, " If I be denied this pleasure, yet I have others to supply its place. I know every inch of ground in this parish, and am as well acquainted with all who live in it. My neighbours therefore

fore frequently come to ask my opinion on matters of husbandry, in which they are engaged. I give them my advice with pleasure ; and if they be poor people, I provide them with the seed they want, and they repay it me the ensuing harvest. Thus am I serviceable to others, without injuring myself or my family.

“ In my endeavours to do good to my neighbours, I am assisted by our vicar, who is a very good man, and of whom

whom I have, in some degree, made a bishop, by the weddings, christenings and tithes, with which I have enriched him. I have even given him some instructions concerning his business in the pulpit ; for the country people in general, like example better than precept. The general rule I taught him to lay down to his congregation was no more than this : *No rest, good neighbours, to your land ; but peace among yourselves.*"

Mr. Jackson

Mr. Jackson could not help applauding such principles, and told the good old villager, that he apprehended he was of more service to the vicar, than he was to the lawyer, if any such professional man lived near them.

The good old man replied, "We have indeed one lawyer among us, but I have pretty well spoiled his trade. Had I taken only sixpence every time I have been consulted, in order to settle disputes, I should at this time have

have been a very rich man. In all places there frequently will happen disputes of one kind or other, and principally when the ground of any deceased person is to be parcell-ed out among his successors.

“ On these occasions, they generally come to me for my advice ; and if there be chil-dren to be married, I soon settle the affair. If there be any ground in dispute, and the parties cannot agree about it, they take me in their little cart, and being on the spot, I have

have the ground surveyed. I then weigh the good and bad qualities of it in my mind, and endeavour, if I can, to satisfy the different parties.

“ When I find the parties are not inclined to agree, the next day I get them all together here, and I always keep a barrel of good ale on the run, such as will soften the most obdurate and flinty heart. I give them a glass or two of it, and in the mean time I tell them, that a law-suit would cost ten times

more

more than the ground is worth ; that if they proceed in it, they will lose a great deal of time as well as money, and ever be enemies to each other. These arguments and a few glasses of ale, never fail to make up the matter, and bring about a perfect reconciliation. It is true, I lose my ale by such a practice, but then I am amply repaid by the reflection of having done good."

Here the cottager called to his wife, and told her to bring a jug

a jug of their ale. Mr. Jackson drank some of it, and confessed that it was admirably calculated to make peace among his neighbours, in the village, especially when administered by so able a hand, who knew how to extract friendship from the very means that often produced strife and disaffection.

By this time the storm was entirely abated, Nature had put off her gloomy aspect, and the returning sun began to enliven every thing. Mr.

Jackson

Jackson took a friendly leave, and promised to see them again in a few days. On his return home, "Who would not (said he to himself) prefer the healthful age of this good cottager, happy in his own esteem and the love of others, to the vanity of those great men, who make no other use of their abundance, than to set examples of luxury and dissipation, who make light of public scorn and hatred, and whom the very grave will not protect from infamy and execration !









57

